

A DAY AT THE BEACH

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Lying on the beach on this lazy, Saturday afternoon, I decide to write. I've always loved writing and try to write every day, even if just in my journal. Reaching into my beach bag for notebook and pen, I realize how relaxed I feel surrounded by the sounds of the beach—a blend of squawking seagulls and laughter of excited children. I can't think of any place I'd rather be than right here...right now. So staring off over the water, I allow my imagination to lead the way on my writing journey. Never knowing where my inner writer will take me, I prepare for an unexpected journey.

Speaking of journeys; when I think of a journey; adventure, mystery and danger comes to mind. Automatic thoughts of exciting journeys pop into my head. I think of Dorothy in the Land of Oz; Bilbo Baggins in Middle Earth; Harry Potter in Wizardry School. Okay, I admit these journeys are pure fiction, but that's where my imagination takes me. I know I'll never meet a hobbit, a wizard, or a munchkin, but no harm wishing for one journey to shake up my life; just one to make me feel alive.

With my head resting on one hand, chewing the tip of my pen with the other, I contemplate a magical journey. I can't help squishing the soft sand between my toes, as I allow my imagination to take hold. Staring off into the blue horizon, I focus on where to begin. Suddenly a seagull flies down and lands in front of me. *'Hey little buddy'*, I think, *'what kind of journey have you been on?'* He just flies away. *'Lucky bird, wish I could fly...what a journey I'd have.'*

Feeling a little sorry for myself, I try to think of one exciting journey I've had. Nothing comes to mind. Still chewing on my pen, my inner voice sticks her oar in, *'You're on an exciting journey and have been for sixty six years...silly woman.'*

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“Humph! That’s what you think.” I reply stubbornly, using my outside voice...realising people are looking at me strangely. Feeling rather foolish, I smile innocently. *‘See, nothing wrong here,’* I think. *‘Just having a conversation with myself. Everyone does that, right?’*

Returning to my inner conversation, this time with my inside voice, I repeat, *‘Humph! How does my boring journey compare to, oh, let’s say, Dorothy on her journey on the yellow brick road?’*

I can’t wait to hear Ms. Know It All explain. After all, I’ve never met a scarecrow who wished he had a brain; a tin man who wished he had a heart; a cowardly lion who wished he had the courage. And needless to say, I’ve never met a wicked witch who attacked me with cruel words and actions, and definitely not a beautiful, good witch, who offered kindness and insight. And, finally where’s my wizard who challenged me to face my demons and bring back the proof I conquered them? How does my journey even slightly compare?

‘So go ahead, Ms. Know It All! Help me understand how my journey even vaguely compares.’

‘Well,’ my inner voice replies. *‘I need you to close your eyes and think. Go ahead think. Think really hard.’*

‘Do I have to tap my ruby slippers?’ I ask, sarcastically.

‘Very funny,’ she replies. *‘Just close your eyes and remember...remember your journey. Remember where you’ve been and what you’ve learned.’*

I give in and close my eyes; the warm sun on my back feels wonderful. *‘I’m hungry,’* I think, my stomach reminding me I missed breakfast. *‘Maybe, I’ll buy a hot dog first.’*

'Stop procrastinating,' my inner voice orders. 'Just keep your eyes closed and go back...back...back.'

'Okay. Take me on this journey.' I reply, a little apprehensive.

I allow my memories free reign. They form quickly, swirling around in my mind. I see the places I've been; the people I've met; the challenges I've faced. It's happens so quickly, I feel like Dorothy as she watched images, caught in the eye of a tornado, fly into view.

Suddenly, and I'm not even exaggerating, I see faces. Really, I see faces....those who have walked with me through self doubt and confusion, helping me to speak my truth with confidence and grace. Family and friends who have encouraged me to leave my comfort zone, armed with the knowledge I can do anything if I work hard and believe I can. I realize, as I look upon these faces, my scarecrow really does exist...not made of straw, but of knowledge and confidence.

As this image swirls away, another image appears. This time filled with the faces of those who have walked with me through heart break...family and friends who have encouraged me to make better decisions in love and life. Those who have helped me believe that I am a strong, capable woman, worthy of love not only for others, but for herself. I realize, as I look upon these faces, my tin man really does exist...not built of tin, but of love and friendship.

Still chewing my pen, deep in thought, I see the faces of those who have challenged me to find my strength and courage. When I faced adversity and felt I didn't have the strength to go on, they guided me through the maze of hopeless resignation. They're the faces of those who have encouraged me to face my fears and heal my emotional wounds--to find the courage to

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forgive, not only others but myself. I am awestruck as I look upon these faces, realizing my cowardly lion really does exist...not made of fur and a long tail, but of courage and strength.

Then I see my good witch, not with wings and a wand, but in the faces of those who have offered guidance without criticism or judgement; those who have listened and helped in the search for my heart's desire. When I felt lost and alone, they were there to guide me along the sometimes dark, scary roads. Again, I'm awestruck. I feel gratitude for their encouragement, as I continue to believe in myself and trust no matter how dark the road, I will find my way.

And then I see the wicked witch; not with a green face and wicked laugh, but in the faces of those who have maliciously bullied and belittled me. I am thankful for what they've taught me; that life isn't always fair and can sometimes be cruel.

Finally, I see my wizard, not hiding behind a curtain, but inside me...my inner voice. The voice that challenges me to look back at where I've been; the people I've met; the places I've been. I'm grateful for her nagging wisdom and guidance. For helping me to believe I have the power and the wisdom to live every day of the rest of my life, with thought, love, courage, and hope. And amazingly, what I've been searching for, I've had all along. I just had to learn it for myself.

'Humph!' I say, opening my eyes. It feels so good to realize I am, indeed, on a journey filled with adventure, mystery and a little danger. It just took a day at the beach to realize how very blessed I am, and of course, a little push from my inner voice.

'See, that wasn't so hard,' my inner voice says, triumphantly.

'Humph.' I reply, a lot less sarcastic.

Oh, by the way, did I mention my inner voice can be so annoying? Always appearing just when I think I know what I'm doing. Sometimes I wish she would hop into an air balloon and fly somewhere over the rainbow. Okay, I'm kidding. I wouldn't want to continue this journey without my wisdom. And, come to think about it, what would I do without my knowledge, my heart, and my courage...I may not have been aware of it at the beginning of my story, but I sure am now.

'Humph,' I say again. 'There you go...happy now?'

'Yep.' comes her reply. 'I like how you interacted with the Wizard of Oz. Good analogy.'

'Thank you,' I reply. 'Now, would you like me to compare my journey to Bilbo Baggins, and, just for good measure, Harry Potter? That could be fun.'

'Laugh out loud,' she replies, with attitude. 'Just take that pen out of your mouth and write what you know and feel.'

Following orders, my thoughts free to explore, I put my pen to paper. I begin writing... not worrying about grammar or spelling. I write one word after the other. The words flow until my first draft is finished. Feeling proud and happy, I stand, placing my things in my bag and walk to the food stand. With a hot dog in hand, I sit down on a bench and listen to the sounds of seagulls and children playing...I'm filled with awe and appreciation.

God, it's good to be alive!